NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

EARLY SUCCESSIONAL HABITAT DEVELOPMENT/MANAGEMENT

(Ac.)

CODE 647

DEFINITION

Manage early plant succession to benefit desired wildlife or natural communities.

PURPOSE

Increase plant community diversity to provide habitat for early successional species.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

On all lands that are suitable for the kinds of desired wildlife and plant species.

CRITERIA

Management will be designed to achieve the desired plant community in density, vertical and horizontal structure and plant species diversity.

Where planting is required, native regionally adapted plant materials will be used whenever possible.

Measures must be provided to control noxious weeds and other invasive species.

To benefit insect food sources for grassland nesting birds, spraying or other control of noxious weeds will be done on a “spot” basis to protect grasses, forbs and legumes that benefit native pollinators and other wildlife.

CONSIDERATIONS

Vegetative manipulation to maximize plant and animal diversity can be accomplished by disturbance practices including: selected herbicide techniques, brush management, prescribed burning, light disking, mowing, prescribed grazing, or a combination of these.

This practice should be applied periodically to maintain the desired early successional plant community and rotated throughout the managed area.

Wildlife habitat purposes often require lighter seeding rates than specified for soil erosion.

Managing for early successional plant communities is beneficial if not essential for less mobile animal species. The less mobile the species, the more important it is to provide all the habitat requirements in a small area.

Design and install the treatment layout to best facilitate operation of all machinery used to make easily controlled burning boundaries. Whenever possible, lay out strips to have some multiple or full width passes by all farm implements.

Prescribed grazing may be used as a management tool to achieve the intended purpose of this practice.

Management practices and activities should not disturb cover during the primary nesting period for grassland species. Exceptions can be allowed for periodic burning, light disking, selected herbicide techniques, selected mechanical removal or mowing when necessary to maintain the health of the plant community. Mowing may be needed during the plant establishment period to control weeds and growth of woody vegetation.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Specifications for this practice shall be prepared for each site. Specifications shall be recorded using approved specifications sheets and job sheets. Narrative statements in the conservation plan or other acceptable

documentation can supplement specifications or job sheets. Specifications shall be reviewed and approved by an NRCS biologist. Approval by state wildlife agency or other biologist can occur when directed by NRCS State biologist.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

The following actions shall be carried out to insure that this practice functions as intended throughout its expected life. These actions include normal repetitive activities in the application and use of the practice (operation), and repair and upkeep of the practice (maintenance).

Periodic disturbance will be incorporated into the management plan to ensure the intended purpose of this practice

Any use of fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals to assure early successional management shall not compromise the intended purpose.

REFERENCES

Best, L. B., K. E. Freemark, J.J.Dinsmore and M. Camp. 1995. A review and synthesis of bird habitat use in agricultural landscapes of Iowa. Am. Midl.Nat. 134:1-29.

Burger, L.W. 2002. Quail management: Issues, concerns, and solutions for public and private lands-a southeastern perspective. Proceedings of the National Quail Symposium 5.

Hamrick, R.G., and J.P. Carroll. 2002. Response of northern bobwhite populations to agricultural habitat management in south Georgia. Proceedings of the 9th Annual Conference of the Wildlife Society 9:129.

Roseberry, J.L. 1992. Cooperative upland research. Effects of emerging farm practices and practices on habitat quality for upland game: Upland game habitat associations. Illinois Department of Conservation